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Assembly California Legislature



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STATE ADMINISTRATION

JOINT LEGISLATIVE AUDIT COMMITTEE

February 29, 2016

Instructional Quality Commission
1430 N Street, Suite #5111
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: History-Social Science Framework

Dear Instruction Quality Commission Members:

While we appreciate the recent changes made to the History-Social Science Framework relating to the Armenian Genocide, we write to provide comment on an additional section that is critical to this point in history.

We urge you to consider incorporating two additional changes to the framework as articulated below:

1. The addition of language to the Eleventh Grade U.S. History section regarding the unprecedented U.S. humanitarian response to the Genocide, largely through the efforts of the first U.S. Congressional sanctioned humanitarian organization, the Near East Relief. We recommend the following language for Grade 10:

Teachers can introduce the history of the Near East Relief organization established by the former U.S. ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau. Near East Relief came to the aid of hundreds of thousands of Armenian Genocide survivors through the establishment of orphanages, food and vocational programs, etc. Teachers can also use the example of the first international aid project of the Red Cross in helping Armenian Genocide survivors, and the prevalent use of the phrase, "Remember the starving Armenians!" as a means to demonstrate to students the profound effect the Armenian Genocide had on the American public.

Additionally, we recommend the following language for Grade 11:

Wilson's grave concerns regarding the first modern era genocide perpetrated by the Turkish government of the Ottoman Empire against their Armenian subjects was reflected in one of his Fourteen Points, which proposed: "...the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development..."



With the end of the war, Wilson was heralded as a hero in Europe when he traveled there to attend the Paris Peace Conference. Despite his significant role in designing the Versailles Treaty which ended the war, Wilson ultimately could not convince Congress to join the League of Nations.

The events of World War I also solidified a new movement within civil society to advocate for international and provide humanitarian aid to people in other countries. The American Red Cross established its first international aid project in the wake of the Turkish massacres of 200,000 Armenians in the 1890's, and Clara Barton, founder of the Red Cross, even travelled to Constantinople to try to persuade Ottoman authorities to stop the violence against Armenians.

WWI further transformed the scale of international humanitarian aid efforts carried out by Americans. This was exemplified by the creation of the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, later incorporated by an act of Congress in 1919 and renamed Near East Relief. Through an unprecedented publicity campaign across the U.S., Near East Relief raised over \$116,000,000 — equivalent to nearly two billion dollars today — and provided food, clothing, medical treatment, and shelter to genocide survivors, including 132,000 children, who were raised and educated in orphanages across the region. The refrain, "Remember the starving Armenians," became commonplace in American households at the time, demonstrating this new interest in using American economic strength to help others in faraway places."

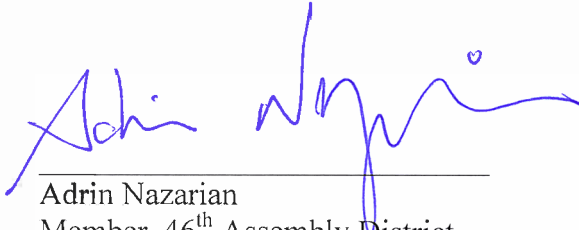
2. The addition of language to the Tenth Grade World History section regarding the connection between the Armenian Genocide and the Jewish Holocaust. We strongly urge the members of the History-Social Science SMC and the Instructional Quality Commission to join us in increasing awareness of the Armenian Genocide, which is an under-recognized historical event in California's classrooms. We recommend the following language:

Teachers should guide students in an examination of the meaningful links between the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust. Austrian-Jewish lawyer, Rafael Lemkin, coined the word "genocide" and led the campaign for its criminalization in response to the lack of accountability and reparation for the Armenian Genocide. Emboldened by this lack of accountability, Adolf Hitler said to his generals on the eve of their invasion of Poland, "Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?" Numerous German military officers, who had been stationed in Turkey during WWI, were aware of the Ottoman regime's plan to destroy the Armenians, and some of them even issued orders for the deportation of Armenians. Without penalty, some later became leaders within the Nazi military apparatus that carried out the Holocaust.

These additions will promote critical thinking as students study the interconnections between historical events. It would also ensure that an outstanding moment in our Nation's history—the U.S. response to the Armenian Genocide—is included among the lessons that are taught.

Once again, thank you for your work to ensure students and survivors of the genocide living in our communities have an appropriate and fair representation of the Armenian Genocide. We urge you to consider these important additions to the frameworks relating to the first genocide of the 20th century.

Sincerely,
Members of the State Legislature

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Adrin Nazarian', written over a horizontal line.

Adrin Nazarian
Member, 46th Assembly District

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Katcho Achadjian', written over a horizontal line.

Katcho Achadjian
Member, 35th Assembly District

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Scott Wilk', written over a horizontal line.

Scott Wilk
Member, 38th Assembly District

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